

Floods

Floods are the most damaging, costly, and deadly severe weather-related phenomena. Annually, floods cost the U.S. over \$4 billion in property damage and are responsible for approximately 150 deaths.

All of Alabama is vulnerable to floods anytime of the year. Due to the state's close proximity to the Gulf of Mexico, Alabama has an almost unlimited supply of available moisture. When low pressure systems move into the area and combine with this moisture, the resulting heavy rains can produce floods. Also, slow-moving, summertime thunderstorms can produce flooding rains in a very short period of time.



Alabaster (Shelby Co.), August 2008
Photo Courtesy of Rick Lacey

Flash Flood

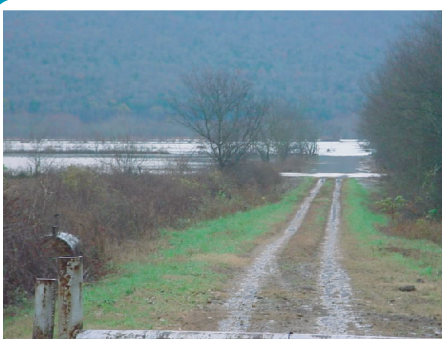
Flash floods can occur within a few minutes or hours of heavy rainfall or from a dam or levee failure. These floods can destroy structures, down trees, roll boulders, and create new waterways. Rapidly rising water can reach heights of 30 feet or more! Furthermore, flash flood producing rains can also trigger catastrophic mudslides. You may not always have a warning of these sudden and deadly floods.



Homewood (Jefferson Co.), September 2004
Photo Courtesy of Jefferson Co. EMA

Urban Flood

Floods can be magnified in urban areas. As land is converted from fields and woodlands to roads and parking lots, it loses its ability to absorb rainfall. Urbanization increases runoff two to six times over what would occur on natural terrain. During periods of urban flooding, streets can become swift moving rivers, while basements can become death traps as they fill with water.



Woodville (Jackson Co.), December 2004

River Flood

River floods are a natural and inevitable part of life in Alabama. Low lying areas near rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs are susceptible to river floods. Some river floods occur seasonally when winter or spring rains fill river basins with too much water too quickly. Others occur from slow-moving low pressure systems. Torrential rains from decaying tropical systems can also produce river floods.



Catoma Creek (Montgomery Co.), March 2005

Area Flood

These nuisance long-duration floods are usually not life-threatening. Standing water in a low-lying area such as an open field is an example of an area flood. Significant agricultural losses and displaced livestock can occur with these floods. In addition, stagnant water from this type of flooding can serve as a breeding ground for insects and diseases.